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**NEWS RELEASE**

**WOMAN ON CELL PHONE CHARGED WITH CRIMINAL VEHICULAR HOMICIDE**

Dakota County Attorney James Backstrom announced that **Lori Janine Hoefs**, age 56 of Oronoco, was charged\* last week with one count of each of Criminal Vehicular Homicide and Criminal Vehicular Operation Resulting in Substantial Bodily Harm, and two counts of Criminal Vehicular Operation Resulting in Bodily Harm in connection with a fatal crash that occurred on October 22, 2016, which killed Brenda Travis, age 78 of Rochester, and caused serious injuries to three others.

The allegations contained in the criminal complaint reflect that around 10:20 a.m. on October 22, 2016, Minnesota State Patrol and Dakota County Sheriff's Deputies responded to a crash at Highway 56 and County Road 88 in Randolph Township. Hoefs was driving westbound on County Road 88. She admitted being unfamiliar with the area and did not see the stop sign. She ran the stop sign and crashed into a Toyota going northbound on Highway 56 where Brenda Travis was a passenger in the front seat. The driver sustained broken ribs and a broken pelvis. Hoefs admitted to being on her phone at the time she ran the stop sign.

Additional facts pertaining to this case can be found in the criminal complaint, which is located online at: <http://www.co.dakota.mn.us/LawJustice/CriminalComplaint/Pages/default.aspx>. Hoefs was charged by summons and her first appearance is set for August 6, 2018 at 9:00 a.m. in Hastings.

Backstrom commented: *"This appears to be another example of distracted driving that tragically took another life and caused serious injuries on our roads."* Backstrom extended his sympathies to the family and friends of Brenda Travis and his hope that those injured in this incident will fully recover.

Backstrom thanked the Dakota County Sheriff's Office for their initial response and assistance at the scene of this crash and the Minnesota State Patrol for their investigation into this matter.

If you have questions, contact James Backstrom at 651-438-4438.

*\*Criminal charges are not evidence of guilt. A defendant/suspect is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.*